

## **ERC SHORT GUIDE TO ELIGIBILITY EXTENSION REQUESTS**



## ERC short guide to eligibility extension requests

The document is based on the ERC Work Programme 2023, including the applicable restrictions on submission of proposals and on the Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2023 calls. This short guide does not constitute a legal document. It is a document for information purposes created to clarify common doubts on the application of ERCEA eligibility rules. Should there be any discrepancies with the legal documents, these last will prevail. The present document contains the eligibility examples based on real cases and questions. The examples and the documents included in this guide were invented and do not contain personal data. The document has six sections based on different eligibility cases. For every section, you will first read the legal bases and then the case studies.

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## SUMMARY

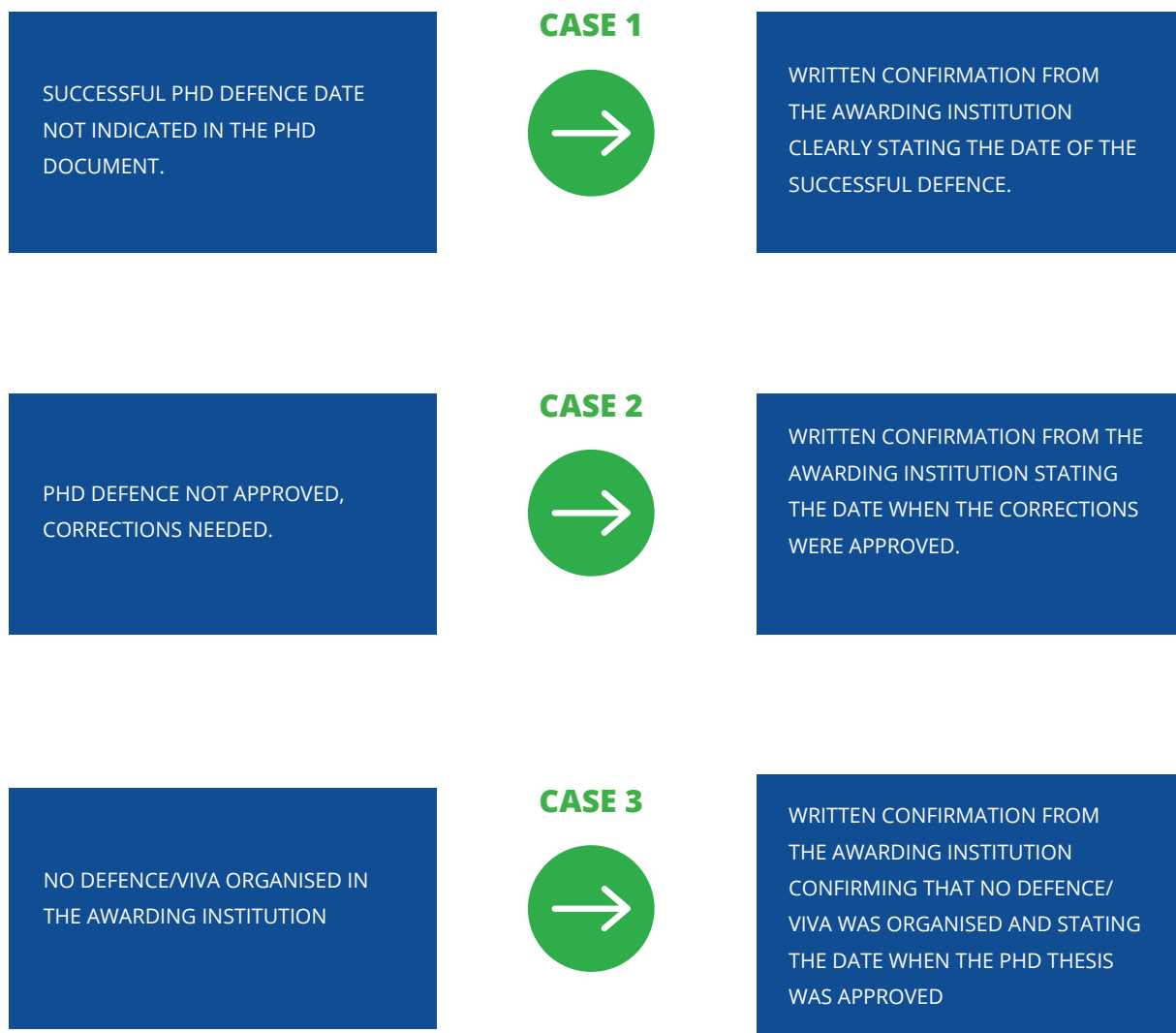
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# 1. PHD REFERENCE DATE

## 1.1 Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

For ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants the reference date for the calculation of the eligibility period is the certified date of the successful defence (and not the award) of the PhD degree.

### PhD reference date - possible scenarios/case studies:



## CASE 4

### Question:

*This applicant currently has two PhDs, one obtained in 2008 and one in 2013. Could the applicant still apply to the ERC Consolidator 2023 if he officially renounce to the PhD obtained in 2008? He has already contacted the university that granted him the first PhD and he has been told that there is an official procedure to renounce to the title and to be de-list by their list of doctors.*

### Answer:

If an applicant decides to submit a proposal and the question of admissibility/eligibility is not clear cut, an Admissibility and Eligibility Review Committee may be convened to discuss the case and make a decision based on the submitted documentation.

According to the ERC Work Programme 2023 (ERC WP): *“The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the successful defence of the PhD degree”.*

Even if a researcher renounced their first PhD, they would renounce the PhD that was awarded on a certain date, which according to the ERC WP, is the date used for the calculation of the eligibility of the ERC calls (unless the renouncement would cause the annulment of the first PhD with a retroactive effect as it had never existed). In any case, ERCEA would strongly discourage applicants to follow this type of procedure. Please be aware that the reason why the Starting and Consolidator Calls have a PhD eligibility window in the first place, is to ensure that Principal Investigators applying to the same call are at a similar academic career stage. The fact that the PI would renounce their first PhD would not have an impact on their career stage and all related research experience acquired, which should be included in the CV as well. Therefore, we cannot give you a straight reply as at this point we do not have information about all elements of this case. The legal impact of the specific procedure that the PI is following would need to be analysed by our legal team, based on some more concrete elements. However, as mentioned before, we would strongly discourage this type of practice.

## 2. MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVES

### 2.1 Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants respectively for the following properly documented circumstances<sup>32</sup>, provided they started before the call deadline:

- **Maternity:** 18 months extension for each child born before or after the PhD award. If the applicant can document a longer maternity leave, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave taken until the call deadline.
- **Paternity:** extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken until the call deadline for each child born before or after the PhD award.

*32For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree.*

### 2.1 Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

#### CASE1

##### Question:

*"I was on maternity leave for 10 months after my son was born. Then I worked part-time (50%) for another 12 months to take care of him (worked in the mornings and parental leave in the afternoons). Could the maternity leave and part-time work combined be counted to extend my eligibility window? I mean 18 months + 6 months = 24 months?"*

##### Answer:

The PI may request a flat rate of 18 months extension of the eligibility window due to maternity for each child born before or after the PhD award. In case an applicant can document a longer maternity leave than 18 months, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave taken until the call deadline.

If the actual maternity leave or the combined actual maternity and parental leave taken accounts for less than 18 months, the 18-month flat rate will be granted. In this specific case, the documented leave accounts for 10 months + 12 months/2 = 16 months. Part-time parental leave is assimilated to maternity leave for the calculation of the total combined leave. Since the documented leave accounts for less than 18 months, the applicant will be granted 18 months of extension.

## CASE 2

### Question:

*"I was on maternity leave for 10 months after my son was born. Then I worked part-time (50%) for another 20 months to take care of him (worked in the mornings and parental leave in the afternoons). How many months of extension can I request?"*

### Answer:

See the details of the previous example. In this case, the combined actual maternity and parental leave accounts for more than 18 months. The actual leave taken was 10 months + 20 months/2= 20 months. Hence, if properly documented, 20 months of extension could be granted.

## CASE 3

### Question:

*Can a paternity leave document (attesting the duration of the leave) be signed by the PhD supervisor of the candidate? My concern comes from what is written in the ERC WP:*

*"It's not issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department), as indicated in the following extract from the ERC Guide for applicants. Paternity leave For paternity leaves, an extension will be granted corresponding to the documented time of paternity and/or parental leave actually taken for each child born before or after the PhD award (counting up until the call deadline). Both full time and part time leaves can be accepted if properly documented. The same principle also applies for child adoption. Supporting documents: an official signed document<sup>56</sup> from the employer certifying start and end date(s) of the individual leave(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods".*

<sup>56</sup> The certificate should be issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department).

### Answer 1:

In the Information for Applicants ERCEA uses "an officer from the HR department" as an example, but it can also be someone else that issues the certificate. Anyone who has a responsibility role in the institution and who is empowered to certify a leave is valid. ERCEA advise applicants to make a case with official documents with dates, and any documents they may be able to provide to prove that a PI took paternity leave. The Admissibility and Eligibility Review Committee then discusses each case after the call deadline, based on the documents submitted at the stage of application.

In case the document(s) supplied by the applicant do not contain all the information necessary for the Admissibility and Eligibility Review Committee to make an informed decision, they may contact the applicant for more information/different documentation.

### Answer 2:

The certificate should be issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department, the Director of the lab). The PhD supervisor would normally enter into that category but the decision of the Committee will depend on the information provided with the submitted document. Hence, ERCEA advises the applicant to submit a document from the PhD supervisor where the supervisor also indicates his/her position at the University or research institution (Research professor of the Department, Director of the lab, ...).



## 3. EXTENSION DUE TO LONG-TERM ILLNESS

### 3.2. Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

*The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the actual award according to the national rules of the country where the degree was awarded.*

*The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants respectively for the following properly documented circumstances<sup>32</sup>, provided they started before the call deadline:*

- **Long-term illness<sup>33</sup> or national service:** extension by the documented amount of leave taken by the Principal Investigator until the call deadline for each incident which occurred after the PhD award date.

<sup>32</sup> For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree.



<sup>33</sup> Over 90 days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

### 3.3. Case studies

#### CASE 1:

##### Question:

*The applicant requests an extension of the eligibility window due to the long-term illness of her mother and provides the certificate below. Is the leave properly documented?*

	 <p>The LONDON POLITICAL ECONOMICS University ■</p> <p>Harmony Street London WC 1A United Kingdom Tel. +44 100 000 0101 Email: janedoe@lpe.uk</p> <p><b>Jane Doe</b> Director</p>
March 19, 2020	
This is to certify that Dr Marie Dupont, born in February 13 <sup>th</sup> 1982, was a post-doctorate fellow in my research team between 2015 and 2017. Dr Dupont was absent from work during the period 01 March 2016 to 01 September 2016 when, due to the serious illness of her mother, took a leave to take care of her.	
Sincerely, Jane Doe,	
	

**Answer:**

To document an extension for long-term illness of a family member, the applicant should provide an official signed document from the employer certifying start and end date(s) of the individual leave(s) and mentioning the reason for the leave, similar to the document in this case. Separate leave periods, as long as they relate to the same condition of the family member are accepted. However, the proof of mother's long-term illness is still missing. Therefore, this request should be supported by an official document explaining the long-term nature of the illness (e.g. from a doctor or an insurance company). The supporting documents should also prove the family relationship. In this case, the family relationship is clear from the certificate of the university. Otherwise a birth certificate from the applicant showing the name of the mother would be needed.

**CASE 2:****Question:**

*"Should the leave taken to take care of a family member be continuous or can it be taken in separate periods?"*

**Answer:**

It is acceptable if the time off from work happened over several periods, as long as the leaves were related to the same illness or condition. It has to be clear from the documents provided that the leaves are related to the same illness of the family member.

**CASE 3:****Question:**

*"An applicant requests 7 months of extension due to the long-term illness of his father. He provided the document below together with a document from a doctor confirming the father's sickness and explained that, after the postdoc, he was unemployed while taking care of his father. Is the extension request justified and properly documented?"*

**Answer:**

Unemployment is not one of the circumstances for extension established in the Work Programme (please see also Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2023 calls section 4.4 "Supporting documents for extension requests"). These cases are no clear-cut and therefore, they are discussed by the Admissibility and Eligibility Committee (AERC) based on the submitted documents.

However, early termination and postponement of an employment contract can be considered if properly documented. The above document confirms the long-term illness of the father, clearly indicating the original end date and the date of the earlier termination of the employment contract, the reason of it and the family relationship. Therefore it is acceptable to extend the eligibility window by 3 months.

Additional documents to further clarify the remaining 4 months claimed could be added such as a subsequent contract, which start date was postponed to take care of the father and/or caretaking allowances received by the applicant during the unemployment period.

## 4. EXTENSION DUE TO CLINICAL TRAINING FOR NON MD APPLICANTS

### 4.1. Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

*The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the actual award according to the national rules of the country where the degree was awarded.*

*The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants respectively for the following properly documented circumstances<sup>32</sup>, provided they started before the call deadline:*

- **Clinical training:** extension by the documented amount of clinical training received by the Principal Investigator after the award of the first eligible degree and until the call deadline, up to a maximum of 4 years.

<sup>32</sup> For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree

### 4.2. Case study

#### CASE 1:

##### Question 1:

*I have a PhD in Psychology followed by two years of clinical training to become a specialist. Can this clinical training be considered valid to extend the eligibility window even if I am not a medical doctor?*

##### Answer:

Any applicant, regardless if they hold a medical degree (MD) or not, can request an extension of the eligibility window due to clinical training.

To support an extension request due to clinical training, applicants should submit with the application a certificate (or other document) they received at the end of the training period (issued by the university/institute/hospital) clearly stating that they completed their clinical training and also indicating the total number of days taken for clinical training, and the exact dates. It is acceptable if the time dedicated to clinical training was taken in different periods over several months/years.

##### Question 2:

*"I have a postgraduate degree in behavioural therapy. Can this degree be considered clinical training?"*

##### Answer:

Postgraduate studies as such are not taken into account as clinical training. However, if applicable and clearly documented, some applied aspects/parts of a programme indicated as clinical training, involving patients, in hospital environment or other health care facility could be considered for extension. The decision on the eligibility will be based on the submitted documents.

## 5. EXTENSION DUE TO RESTRICTIONS ON SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

### 5.1 Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

#### Restrictions on submission of proposals

The following restrictions apply:

- A researcher may participate as Principal Investigator<sup>42</sup> in only one ERC frontier research project at any one time<sup>43</sup>;
- A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in an ERC frontier research project may not submit a proposal for another ERC frontier research grant, unless the existing project ends<sup>44</sup> no more than two years after the call deadline;

<sup>42</sup>Including all Principal Investigators supported under the Synergy Grant.

<sup>43</sup>A new main frontier research grant project can only start after the duration of the project fixed in a previous grant agreement for one of the main frontier research grants has ended.

<sup>44</sup>According to the duration of the project fixed in the previous grant agreement of the main frontier research grant. A new frontier research project can only start after the duration of the project fixed in a previous frontier research ERC grant agreement has ended.

### 5.2 Case study

#### CASE 1:

##### Question 1:

A Principal Investigator in an ongoing ERC project would like to apply to CoG2023 (deadline 02/02/2023). She was granted a 6-month extension for her ERC project so the running grant will end in August 2024. Will she be eligible to the CoG2023 call?

##### Answer:

According to the ERC WP 2023 "A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in an ERC frontier research project may not submit a proposal for another ERC frontier research grant, unless the existing project ends no more than two years after the call deadline". If the current project finishes latest in August 2024 (extended end date), the PI will be eligible.

One PI cannot run two main frontier projects at the same time, so in case the COG 2023 application is successful, the start of the new project will have to wait until the end of the current project.

## 6. COMBINED CASE: MORE THAN ONE REASON FOR EXTENSION

### 6.1 Legal basis: Work Programme 2023

The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants respectively for the following properly documented circumstances<sup>32</sup>, provided they started before the call deadline:

- *Paternity: extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken until the call deadline for each child born before or after the PhD award.*
- *Long-term illness<sup>33</sup> or national service: extension by the documented amount of leave taken by the Principal Investigator until the call deadline for each incident which occurred after the PhD award date.*

<sup>32</sup>For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree.

<sup>33</sup>Over ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

### 6.2. Case study

#### CASE 1:

##### Question 1:

*"I had to interrupt my PhD studies after one year for 6 months to take care of my mother who suffered from cancer. In the last year of my PhD studies, I also had a baby. Can I extend my eligibility window with 18 months (child) + 6 months (mother's long-term illness)?"*

##### Answer:

Long-term illness of family member over 90 days can be considered for each incident that occurred after the PhD award. However, maternity leave of 18 months can be considered for each child born before or after the PhD award. Hence, the eligibility window can be extended by 18 months in this case.

